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CS 682 Bioethics: Creation and the Environment

James R. Thobaben

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Syllabus

Course: CS682 W1 (JA 2009)

Title: Bioethics: Creatures & the Environment

Hours: 1.00

Published: Yes, on 11/06/2008

Prerequisites:

CS601

- or -

CS601†

† indicates this may be fulfilled as a co-requisite.

Department: Church in Society

Faculty: Dr. James Thobaben



Email: jim.thobaben@asburyseminary.edu

Office: AD

SPO: 800

Meetings:

On Friday, 01/16/2009 from 8:00a to 9:00p in SH224.

Maximum Registration: 20

Catalog Description: Students will examine the social and cultural interpretation of n/Nature and the theological implications. The ethical focus is on environmental actions, animal rights/welfare, etc.

Objectives:

1-hour Ethics Core Requirement Intensive

BIOETHICS: Creatures & the Environment
CS 682

James R. Thobaben, Ph.D., M.P.H.
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

16 January 2009 8:00 am - 9:00 pm

Meeting Room: AD306 (tentative)

Office Location: AD 302

Office Phone: 858-2369

Home Phone 858-8058

e-mail: jim_thobaben @ asburyseminary.edu

Office Hours: On sabbatical; meetings by appointment

PURPOSE:

To prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze and address ecological/environmental issues from a Christian perspective. To develop ministers who are responsive to the needs, contexts, and insights of parishioners and members of the larger community. To enable ministers to equip their congregations for understanding their moral responsibility in decisions about n/Nature as God's creation.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able:

To demonstrate competence with various Biblical and Christian traditions used in responding to moral issues in the fields of environmental care & non-human animals.

To demonstrate competence with various ethical categories and frameworks used in responding to environmental issues.

To demonstrate competence in utilizing social and cultural analysis in response to contemporary environmental issues.

To apply ethical analysis in developing responses to environmental issues at a congregational and/or institutional level.

To explain how responses to moral problems and moral integrity shape congregational life.

To describe how responses to environmental concerns shape society.

As a second course in ethics, students will be able:

Students will be able:

To demonstrate competence with various Biblical and Christian traditions used in responding to selected moral issues.

To demonstrate competence with various ethical categories and frameworks used in responding to specific contemporary moral issues.

To demonstrate competence in utilizing social, cultural, and/or historical analysis in response to contemporary moral issues.

To apply ethical analysis in developing responses to moral issues at a congregational and/or institutional level.

To recognize the distinctive insights arising from particular social locations (these may include, but are not limited to, particularity arising from ethnic, gender, class, and geographic location).

This course is one of five 1-hour bioethics courses. The others examine:

- Biotechnologies (focusing on genetic alteration, abortion, stem cell research, etc.),

- The moral questions arising from current discussions of cosmology, evolution, and creation,
- Death & dying, and,
- Sickness and disability (along with the distribution of healthcare).

TEXTS:

REQUIRED

- Barkey, M. (ed) Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition [a very short book, easy to read, more "liberty" oriented]
- Pojman, Louis P. , Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application, 4th Edition [it is what its title suggests; read the whole book]

ARTICLES:

REQUIRED:

- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (United Nations) READ: Popular level summaries:
 - o Ecosystem change: <http://www.greenfacts.org/ecosystems/>
 - o Biodiversity: <http://www.greenfacts.org/biodiversity/index.htm>
 - o Health Summary (pdf): <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/proxy/Document.763.aspx>
- "On the Care of Creation: An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation" (Evangelical Environmental Network) <http://www.creationcare.org/resources/declaration.php>
- Wendell Berry, "Christianity and the Survival of Creation" <http://www.crosscurrents.org/berry.htm>
- "Declaration on the Basis of the Common Religion" http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/Religion/common_religion.htm
- "Deep Ecology" The Encyclopedia of Earth http://www.eoearth.org/article/Deep_ecology
- Environmental Audit from: Serve God, Save the Planet: Workbook A Christian

Guide to Action www.servegodsavetheplanet.org (there has been some technical problem with this website; if not up, find another 'environmental audit' and complete).

SUPPLEMENTAL:

- Bernard Daley Zaleha, "The Biological Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" <http://www.christianecology.org/BiologicalBasis.html>
- "The Bible on Environmental Conservation: A 21st Century Prescription," Electronic Green Journal 12: Earth Day 2000 <http://egj.lib.uidaho.edu/egj12/johnson1/>
- Thomas Sieger Derr "Global Eco-Logic" <http://www.surfinthespirit.com/environment/global-eco-logic.shtml> OR <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0002/opinion/derr.html>
- Ray Bohlin, "Christian Environmentalism" <http://www.surfinthespirit.com/environment/christian-environmentalism.shtml> OR <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/ecology.html>
- Steven Best, "Common Natures, Shared Fates: Toward an Interspecies Alliance Politics" <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/Debating/Steven%20Best%20articles%20on%20animal%20issues.html>

NOTE: As is often the case with web-based resources - you may or may not find a given article at the site noted; you remain responsible for the reading even if the website changes or, if you absolutely cannot find one, you may substituted an equivalent from the web, but must submit the name and specific web address.

EXPECTATIONS:

Bioethics: Creation and the Environment is a SEMESTER course. Students should read ALL of the material before the class begins. The exam is given several days after the class meetings end and the final paper is due two or three weeks after (to be decided in class). Do not try to cram all the reading into the week of classes.

Written Work: 7-8 page term paper. Term paper options #1 & #2 do not require approval of topic; #3 does. Make sure the paper includes a "fair" consideration of all major positions and a clear assertion of the position you hold. The papers should include moral reasoning explicitly intended for the Christian community, as well as arguments that would be coherent in a highly secularized setting. Do not focus on counseling issues, but on social and cultural factors and on moral reasoning.

- #1 What are the limits to the human alteration of the "natural"?
- #2 Give a specific example of pollution abatement and the role Christians did/ should have taken.
- #3 Open topic, but must focus on ethics, not counseling or pastoral care.

All written work must be typed with 12 point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double spacing. Do not include substantial quotes from Scripture; use citations. Written material will be evaluated for reasoning, referencing, and for structure and grammar. All references must be noted properly; include page numbers or download information, when appropriate. Follow page limit requirements. Required length of paper does not include reference or title pages. In accordance with ATS policy, all written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision.

Papers are graded anonymously. Each paper should include a title page with the student's name and birthday (in the month/day form; the year is not necessary). All subsequent pages should include only the birthday number, written in the top right corner.

Paper due date & time TBA. Papers must be turned in at Dr. Thobaben's office in Wilmore. There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse. Papers from persons who live more than 50 miles from the Wilmore campus may be sent electronically (this DOES NOT include persons who leave the campus for meetings, vacations, etc.).

Final Examination: A one-hour, in-class final. Part of the exam will be an objective examination over concepts in medical ethics and part will be a response to a case study. Exam date & time TBA. As with the papers, the exam will be graded anonymously. If necessary, the exam may be taken off-campus with a proctor present throughout; the process for this will be discussed on the first day of class.

BOTH THE FINAL PAPER DATE AND EXAM DATE WILL BE DETERMINED IN CLASS.

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings. Acknowledgement of completion will be sought the last day of class. Failure to complete readings on time may result in a lowering of the final grade, as will poor attendance for class. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

FINAL GRADE:

Examination	40%	Date: To be determined	Time: TBA
Term Paper	60%	Date: 23 JANUARY 2009	Time: 9 am
Class Participation		Deduction if lacking	

Reading

Deduction if lacking

Grade Range: Work for the class will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level.

A (93-100) = Exceptional work: markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.

A- (90-92) =

B+ (87-89) =

B (83-86) = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

B- (80-82) =

C+ (77-79) =

C (73-76) = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives

C- (70-72) =

D+ (67-69) =

D (63-66) = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives

D- (60-62) =

F (> 60) = Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

COURSE SCHEDULE

Friday

In-class BASIC CONCEPTS

- Basic concepts in ethics (a review)
- What is life?
- What is n/Nature?
- What are species?
- Is "Christianity" to blame for environmental problems?

o Lynn White Thesis

o Environmentalism & Alternative Religions

2-hour Field Trip

In-class ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS:

- Pollution& power (including class, regional & race inequity)
- Land use & property rights
- Animal rights & the social contract
- Global costs of industrialization (incl. global warming)
- Population, birth control & abortion
- Ecosystem protection
- Biotech as pollution

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSES:

- Is "stewardship" the best model?
- What about political activism?
- Simple living / "Green" living
- How should environmental concerns be prioritized?
- What can a local congregation do?